

CANDID AND CRITICAL
R E M A R K S

O N

The Dialogues of the Dead :

In a LETTER from

A GENTLEMAN in LONDON

TO HIS ,

FRIEND in the COUNTRY.

Fear not the Anger of the Wise to raise,
They best can bear Reproof, who merit Praise.

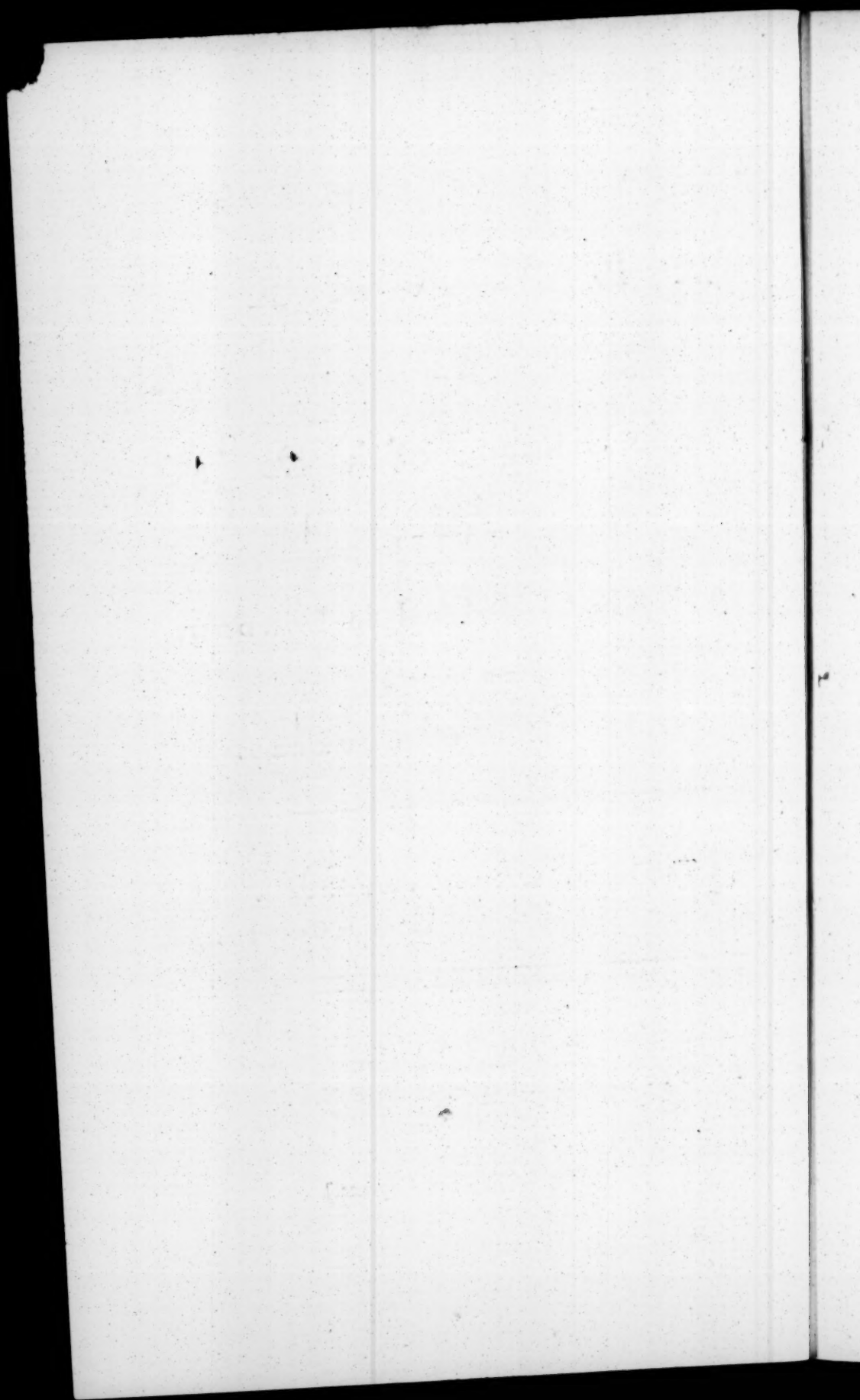
ESSAY ON CRITICISM.

L O N D O N :

Printed for GEORGE KEARSLEY, at the Golden Lion in
Ludgate-street.

M DCC LX.

[Price One Shilling and Sixpence.]



CANDID and IMPARTIAL
REMARKS, &c.

IN A
LETTER, &c. from a Gentleman in
London to his Friend in the Country.

DEAR SIR, London, June 1, 1760.

THE impatience you expressed in
your last for seeing and obtain-
ing a particular account of the
DIALOGUES OF THE DEAD,
lately published here, did not in the least
surprize me. The very observing an ad-
vertisement of a work to be published one
day, and that of a second edition of it
inserted on the same, or at most the suc-
ceeding

ceeding one, had the piece had no other introductory recommendation, could not avoid exciting the curiosity of a person in whom that quality is so very prevalent, as I have ever found it in my friend. But when that work possessed the still further advantage of being the *manœuvre* of a noble author, an author whose merit the success of his former writings had imprinted the sterling stamp upon, my surprize was not that you should be impatient about it, but that your moderation should so far get the better of your curiosity, as to enable you to wait for the work itself, till, as you kindly express yourself, you had my judgment of it to guide and rectify your own. Little, however, as I can deserve such a particular regard shewn to my opinion, the friendship that dictates it undoubtedly demands the return of every endeavour in my power to gratify it. I have therefore sent you, together with the Dialogues themselves, such observations as have occurred to me on each of them separately in the course of a second careful perusal of them. Such as they are,
they

they intreat your acceptance; and it is with the truest sincerity that I wish either they, or the work which has occasioned them, may afford you the amusement which you seem to have promised yourself from them.

FIRST, then, previous to our entering into a *critique* on the works of any author, it is necessary that we should inquire in what rank of consideration he stands with the public: for though *merit* is by no means increased or lessened by such distinction, yet the *fame* which should attend on such *merit* is much too often wholly dependent on it. The glare of a great an established name dazzles our eyes like the large golden letters over some shop of custom: we purchase we know not why, and praise our goods as genuine, only because numbers have bought before us; whilst the poor, humble, unknown, nameless author, like the recluse chamber of the ingenious artist is passed by unnoticed, excepting by a few peculiar connoisseurs; and merely because

unknown, continues unregarded. Such is the too general course of public opinion. Private criticism, however, more clear-sighted and penetrating, should proceed on a principle directly opposite: the critic's maxim should ever be,

Parcere subjectis & debellare superbos.

In short, as the want of an established fame will have no influence towards exciting in him any degree of contempt for the smallest appearance of merit in a maiden author, but on the contrary, will urge him to bestow that sunshine of encouragement which may in time cherish the springing plant to a more noble growth: so also will the name of an esteemed writer, however justly that esteem may formerly have been granted, by no means carry with it the power of a stamp to confer an undue value on metal of less genuine currency. Instead of this he will rather be more rigid, from a generous resentment at seeing only dross produced by a mine, which from former proofs it has been evident is capable,
by

by a proper assiduity in the labourer, of furnishing the most pure and perfect ore. The carelessness which a too firm establishment in the empire of wit is sometimes apt to be productive of, merits rather the spur than the lash of the true critic, whose intention ought to be the exciting and keeping up that kind of emulation in authors which, when ever it subsists, the world is always sure to be the better for.

In this light, then, it is that I would wish the ensuing remarks to be considered; and if in the course of them I should appear not to hold the work under my present consideration in that high rank of esteem which so speedy a republication of it may lay claim to, I must intreat the noble author, for many of whose writings, as well as for his personal character, I have the highest, though no more than a due veneration, to consider what I shall urge, rather as the petulance of a disappointed legatee who expected a much larger donation, than the resentment of an injured heir

heir who has been cut off with nothing.
 Far, very far is it from my design to re-
 present the DIALOGUES OF THE DEAD
 as *intirely* void of merit; on the contrary,
 they possess a considerable share. Many
 of them point out an amazing fund of
 reading and erudition, and more peculiarly
 of historical knowledge; and in several of
 them facts obscure in themselves are stated
 in a very clear, candid, and ingenious
 manner; and characters which appear at
 first to have a strong resemblance are
 placed in their proper lights of opposition:
 yet in the general they are considerably
 deficient in those characteristical, or what
 we may call dramatical, distinctions which
 ought to constitute the essence of dialogue,
 and without which a regular, unbroken
 discourse, wherein the *pro* and *con* of any
 argument were separately handled, and the
 arguments on either side drawn out in a
 due battle array against each other, would
 be greatly preferable to cold and inactive
 conversation, in which it is almost always
 necessary to enter a man of straw into the
 lists, for no other purpose but to shew him
 de-

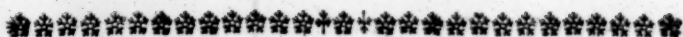
defeated by the force of some *coup de maître* of his favoured antagonist, which he is seldom supplied either with strength to parry or subtlety to evade: nor can it be by any means a sufficient excuse to reply that M. DE FENELON has been greatly deficient in this particular; or even that LUCIAN himself, the original model of this kind of writing, paid not a much stricter regard to it: for with respect to the former it is well known that his dialogues are very far from holding a first rank amongst his other works; and as to the other, besides that he lived at a time when strength of character and the nice touches of dramatic distinction were not so strictly observed, even in the pieces of the theatre, as the custom of the moderns have since required them to be, it must be considered that as the sting of his satire was in general pointed mostly at the heathen mythology, the personages he has in general introduced into his dialogue are those of deities and demigods, to whom he affixed what idea he himself thought proper to form of them, and that great
part

part of his ridicule was built on the causing them to throw aside their supposed dignity, and speak in characters extremely different from what blind devotion and priestly artifice had dressed them up in. The taste of the age we write in must be complied with; and that of the present as much requires dialogue to be characteristic, as that of LUCIAN rendered it almost intirely unnecessary.

BESIDES this fault, and I cannot help looking on it as a very essential one, the Dialogues before me are many of them trivial in their subjects, barren of occasion for the exertion either of wit or genius, and frequently pursued without shewing any apparent design, and terminated without answering any striking purpose.—In a word, there shines through them so little of the author of the *Persian Letters*, that we may not improperly say of them (excepting only a very few, to which I shall endeavour in the course of my observations to do all imaginable justice) with a very trifling alteration from
the

the words of the best writer of dialogue that ever existed, that “ his reasons are
 “ as two grains of wheat hid in two
 “ bushels of chaff; you may seek all the
 “ day ere you find them, and when you
 “ have found them they are *scarce* worth
 “ the search.”--SHAKESPEAR’S *Merchant of Venice*.

NOT to detain you longer however in making general deductions, which you yourself are so much better qualified to draw from a series of observations so particularly pursued as you have desired me to enter into, I shall immediately begin with my subject; and, giving you some account of the subject of each dialogue in the order wherein it stands in the work, leave you to examine them more particularly with the original, and to form your own judgment afterwards of both with that candour and good-nature which I have so often experienced to be the characteristical distinction of all your actions.



DIALOGUE I.

Lord FALKLAND and Mr. HAMPDEN.

OF these two gentlemen the first was a loyal and steady adherent to the interests of king CHARLES I. during the whole of his contests with the people of *England*, and the other as firm and immoveable in republican principles, and in supporting with an unshaken zeal the interests of the people against a too great extent of unlimited power in the royal prerogative.— They are in this dialogue introduced acknowledging their mutual consciousness of the too great lengths to which in the end the ardor of a zeal, founded on both sides at first on just and worthy principles, hurried either party; the necessity of steps on each side of the opposition, which the honest and well-meaning partisans of either were satisfied were wrong, yet knew not how to prevent, is frankly confessed by the personages of the dialogue.— Lord FALKLAND honestly acknowledges that he wished for nothing more than for
a peace;

a peace ; and that as his love for his prince could not overcome his zeal for the liberty of his country, he saw in the proceedings of his party so much to alarm him for the latter, that he dreaded a victory little less than a defeat.--Mr. HAMPDEN as openly owns on his side, that before he died he saw enough in the republican transactions to render him extremely apprehensive of the most fatal consequences of a civil war entered into to preserve the freedom of the English constitution ; and wished no less for a peace than his lordship, but saw no hopes of it from the insincerity of the king and the influence of the queen, unless by taking the *power of the sword* intirely out of his majesty's hand, or in other words, as Lord FALKLAND observes in return, taking away *all power* from the crown. They both however equally join in condemning the disposition and conduct of the clergy on this occasion ; in laying much of the blood shed in those wars to the account of the church ; and in confessing, that were they to be once more on earth they should both shew much

more moderation in any affair of party, than they testified during their former lives.

As to the conduct of this dialogue I shall only make one remark, which may stand for a general one through the work, which is, that our author seems to have succeeded better in those pieces where he has endeavoured to investigate the general and public interests of nations, than in his parallels drawn from the characters of individuals. In this and in many subsequent ones he has given proof of a very careful inspection into, and a very distinct and judicious idea of, historical facts; yet on the whole, the *parturiunt montes* may be but too aptly applied to it; for to what purpose at last has all this learning been so lavishly dispensed through it, but first, to point out what no one who knows the least of the English story is not most thoroughly convinced of; viz. that in the course of the civil commotions of that unhappy reign, there were faults on both sides, and that both sides were hurried on by headstrong zeal to extremities greatly
be~

beyond what either at first intended ; and secondly, to inculcate the following trite maxim with which Lord FALKLAND closes the dialogue, “ that as in the “ church, so also in the state, no evil is “ more to be feared than an enthusiastic “ and rancorous zeal.”

DIALOGUE II.

LOUIS LE GRAND--PETER THE GREAT.

THIS dialogue is no more than a comparison formed between two monarchs, who both became the idol of their people, both occasioned the admiration of the world, and were both equally honoured with the title of *Great* ; yet the methods by which they attained these honours were diametrically opposite to each other. The one had a polished and submissive people to govern, ever fond of promoting the glory of their prince, and ready to obey him on every reasonable occasion, and to assist him in every valuable undertaking. The other was king over a barbarous people, undisciplined, ignorant, and diffi-

difficult to instruct; a set of untamed savages, rugged as their country bears, and not indeed much more docible than those. The one then reached the height of human glory by supporting on every occasion the dignity, the magnificence, and awe of majesty: the other attained the same pinnacle by sinking himself into the greatest obscurity, levelling his greatness with the rank of his meanest domestics, submitting himself to the most laborious employments of a common artificer, and in short lowering himself to a subject, in order to raise his subjects to an almost kingly consequence amongst their neighbours. LOUIS performed great achievements by the assistance of an infinite number of *heroes*, of *politicians*, and of *geniuses already* formed, and all concurring in one general point, viz. their sovereign's glory. PETER had his heroes to create, his politicians to form, his geniuses to cultivate, before he could receive the least assistance from them; and even when formed, the actions he led them on to had only emulation to support them, dragging against a
natural

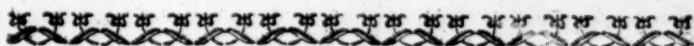
natural bent, an half-tamed barbarism, which frequently impeded even his most rationable and amiable projects.

SUCH then were the characters of the men who are made speakers in this dialogue; which may not improperly be called a just panegyric on the *Russian* monarch put into his own mouth, in which he sets forth the merit of his great self-forbearance, relates the difficulties which lay in his way, and which he nevertheless had fortitude sufficient to surmount; compares his own actions with those of Cæsar and Alexander; candidly confesses his want of command over himself in his excess of drinking, but makes an excuse for the ferocity and cruelty of some of his actions, from the necessity forced on him by the natural stubbornness and disobedient disposition of his people: he however lays a more unanswerable accusation of cruelty to the charge of his rival LOUIS, with respect to his Protestant subjects; a charge which he can make no other reply to, than by throwing it on
the

the power of bigotry and the influence of his confessor. PETER concludes the discourse with these words: " There is (says he) this capital distinction between us: " the pomp and pageantry of state was " necessary to *your* greatness; *mine* was " independent of those outward trappings. " I was great in myself, great in the " energy and powers of my mind, great " in the superiority and *sovereignty* of my " soul over all other men."

THAT these observations are extremely just, and that the czar was a much greater man in point of intrinsic glory, than the Augustus of the French nation, every one will readily allow; but that it is so readily to be allowed, that the parallel has so frequently been drawn between them with advantage to the former, is the very reason that makes me wish the pen of so established an author had not been employed in such a transitory disquisition concerning them, unless the penetration of a superior genius had busied itself in bringing within the narrow compass of a dialogue
some

some few additional lights into their characters, which might have had the advantage of novelty to recommend them to our more particular attention.



DIALOGUE III.

PLATO—FENELON.

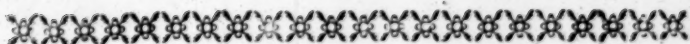
THIS dialogue is partly a complimentary comparison made by the two speakers between their own writings, and partly a review of the present state of taste in the French nation; wherein they both seem from such review to foretel the declension and ruin of that kingdom. Their conversation terminates with a mutual accusation of enthusiasm; in the one with respect to *Madam de Guyon*; and in the other, as to his system of *divine love*; with a mutual confession that their *feeling* had misled them; and “that they would both
 “ have done better, had they avoided
 “ those subjects in which *sentiment* took
 “ the place of *cool reason* and *sober truth*.”

D

As

As points of critical comparison would take up more time to criticise on them, than even the scope our author has given to his own observations has employed, I shall not trouble you with any thing farther on this piece; yet I cannot intirely drop it without pointing out that the noble writer, in mentioning FENELON'S *Dialogues of the Dead*, has made the author freely confess it to have been a fault in them, their being too short, and too much filled with *common-place morals*: yet clearly as he could perceive this defect in another, he has not avoided running into the same error in the work before us, and that without having the same excuse which he has put into the mouth of the archbishop, and which by the way can scarcely be looked on as a sufficient one, since the most simple truths will admit of a greater enlargement than either of them have given way to in their discourses, and may surely be as *strongly imprinted* in a sprightly and characteristic dialogue, as in the more formal disposition of maxims and apophthegms.

D I A-



DIALOGUE IV.

Mr. ADDISON—Dr. SWIFT.

THE purport of this dialogue being of the same nature with the last, viz. an examination of the comparative merits of two men of genius in the world of letters, though indeed far more different from each other than the two last considered, I shall act by it as I did by the former one, only leaving to yourself, dear Sir, to determine how far his opinions of each are or are not right. But as the conduct of this dialogue is very different from that of any of the preceding ones, I cannot avoid entering into a more particular detail with regard to it.

I HAVE in the beginning of these remarks blamed the right honourable author for not throwing something dramatical into the language and manner of his interlocutors : in this place, however, I think he must be wholly acquitted of that

D 2

charge,

charge, as he seems strongly to have aimed at character in it; but then he has fallen into no less material a fault, which is the overturning the *manners* of the drama, by painting such characters different from what the general idea has fixed them to be.

THE dean of St. PATRICK, a writer in his prime towards the beginning of a century as yet not much more than half expired, is a person whose disposition is surely too well known to admit of any great *licentia poetica* being taken in the drawing of his portrait. That he was a *humourist*, is extremely well known; but that he was a *brute*, is not, I think, upon record: that he had *pride*, I shall not endeavour to disprove; but that *self-opinion* was his prevailing foible, is what his writings scarcely are sufficient to evince. That he had a very clear and distinct knowledge of the errors of the administration he lived under, will ever remain perpetuated in his political tracts; but that he either aimed at ministerial power,
or

or looked on himself as the governor of the people of *Ireland*, farther than as a superior understanding might be conscious of its power in guiding, and in that light might be said to govern, the weaker minds of a giddy populace, I own I can see no instance, in all the anecdotes of his history which have occurred to my knowledge, that can give any just ground for a suspicion of: yet are all these characteristics fixed on him by implication in this dialogue.

It is pretty well known that, displeased with certain measures which it was out of his power to prevent, discontented at the singular treatment he himself had met with, and possessed of some share of general misanthropy, though naturally humane to particulars, he thought himself above descending to any servile submission to rank or titles, or even sometimes to the common forms of civility and complaisance, which custom has in general attached to our connections with the great: yet, that he had a great and
just

just esteem for men of high abilities, his correspondences with many of his cotemporaries are a sufficient proof; and that neither the character of a minister, nor the title of a lord, could abate his friendship for a valuable man, are apparent from the compliments he has paid to Lord Oxford, Lord Orrery, &c.

WHY then the noble author of the *DIALOGUES OF THE DEAD* should have introduced him treating in so clownish, so supercilious, and so ungentleman-like a manner a person of the rank, great qualities, and amiable behaviour of Mr. ADDISON, is scarcely to be conceived, unless it is to be supposed, that the misunderstanding between Mr. POPE and the latter gentleman should induce his friend the dean to make a party affair of it, and take up the quarrel in the shades. I cannot but own however, that Mr. ADDISON, though with somewhat less boorishness, falls but little short of the dean in ill-nature in a certain sarcasm, wherein he seems at once to destroy all the merit of

of patriot zeal in his reverence, by attributing the whole tenor of his public actions to the effect of his private resentment.

IN the midst, however, of an altercation which seems to threaten growing still more harsh, in pops Mr. MERCURY, who, “ with a tongue as voluble, and a “ head as conceited” as Capt. *Brazen’s* in the play, instead of making any reply to the elegant reference made to him for judgment by Mr. ADDISON, flies to Dr. SWIFT with a levity not far short of the *Ha! my dear boy! give me a buff* — runs over a long *rotaine* of inquiries relative to the works of the latter; after which, with a *mort de ma vie! I beg the gentleman’s pardon*, turns to the statesman, and with a cold civility, something bordering on contempt, cries out, “ Don’t be discouraged, friend ADDISON; APOLLO “ would perhaps have given a different “ judgment.” He then indeed proceeds to a more particular inquisition into their respective merits as satirists; in which he
gives

gives the preference they undoubtedly deserve, in amiable qualities, to the nicer touches of ADDISON's pen; yet in the several avocations he is for assigning to the two writers in *Elysium*, he seems to imply that the works of the one are too *delicate* to touch any but such as scarce need amendment; and that the other is too *rough a satirist* to produce any good effect on those who want correction.



DIALOGUE V.

ULYSSES—CIRCE.

THIS, the author tells us himself, is not properly a dialogue of the dead, since the scene of it is laid in CIRCE's island, and pleads the example of FENELON for the introducing such a one; an excuse which seems intirely unnecessary, as it only tends to obviate an objection, which it is more than probable nobody would have made, as it seems not absolutely essential that the immediate spot of conversation between persons for ages departed, should

should always be placed in the regions of
Tartarus or *Elysium*.

THE subject of it is an endeavour to prove that all the joys that can attend an unlawful love, though elevated by every relish of luxury, and possessed in the midst of a paradise, are poor, restless, and distasteful, compared to the noble exercises of active virtue, and the sweet rewards bestowed on it by conjugal endearments, though in a desert and unaccommodated solitude. The hero, in his account of *PENELOPE*, has drawn the portrait of a most amiable wife, and the author has furnished him with a flow of language well becoming that orator. If we compare this description, lively as it is, and given with a warmth which seems to spring more from the heart than the head, with the subject of a piece of elegiac poetry which the same author favoured the world with some few years ago, it may afford no improbable conjecture, that this may be only the copy of a picture whose original, so strongly impressed in the heart

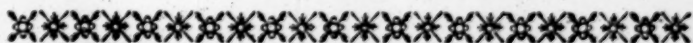
E

of

of a man of sensibility and worth, does equal honour both to the object beloved, and to that love which could retain the same unaltered sentiments so long, after even the irrevocable stroke was past, which must for awhile debar all intercourse, either of the soul or sense.

NOR is there less judgment or knowledge of nature shewn in the contempt which CIRCE, a woman given up wholly to sensual enjoyments, and whose mind is therefore incapable of the delights which ever attend on a delicate sensibility, expresses for the man who is capable of running such lengths in the commendation of virtues which she has no idea of: yet, had the author carried his moral a little farther, and aimed at the proving how greatly that contempt which women of dissolute characters shew for every amiable sentiment is conducive to the corruption of their own sex and the fixing a depravity in ours; had he pointed out to the fair sex how greatly it is in their power to mould mankind to what they please,

pleas; that their charms have full as much ability to fix us to virtue, as they have to allure us to vice, perhaps the principle which he meant to inculcate would have been more forcibly and more completely impressed, than it is at present.



DIALOGUE VI.

MERCURY—An English DUELLIST—
A North American SAVAGE.

THE design of this dialogue is a very good one, a design which, while the folly and madness that gives room for it continues so prevalent, can never be too frequently repeated; which is to point out the absurdity, the inconsistency, and barbarism of the custom of DUELLING, and to shew how far from glory, how much, on the contrary, of infamy is annexed to what is called the *point of honour*, when viewed with impartial eyes, and considered by a mind unbiassed by the false dazzle of European principles.

THIS has been attempted by various authors, and in various manners. Sir RICHARD STEELE assures us his whole comedy of *The Conscious Lovers* was written only to introduce the challenge-scene between *Myrtle* and *Bevil*: it is however, though a very fine single scene, too short to convey every thing that could be desired in it, and yet in a way of serious argument is too grave to answer the purpose of comedy, by laughing it out of doors. COLLIER and some others have treated it intirely seriously; but it is not very likely that works of gravity and cool reflection should have a very strong influence, even if they are at all read by them, on persons whose very actions imply them hurried on by the heat of passions, and guided very little by reflection. The humane, the amiable author of Sir CHARLES GRANDISON has come nearer to the point in his episode of Sir *Hargrave Polesfen*; by treating it in a dramatic manner he has avoided the dryness of a dictatorial essay, and by the importance of the circumstance which introduces it to the grand design

design of his work, he has judiciously enabled himself to dwell sufficiently on it to admit of every argument which cool reason and elevated understanding could urge against it: he has struck at the most essential part, at the very stem of this absurdity; he has plainly proved it to be no test of courage by making his hero, a gentleman of approved and acknowledged valour, decline a duel, though pressed to it by persons of vehemence and impetuosity, highly enraged, and hard to be persuaded, the worst kind of character a man can be engaged with in an affair of this nature; yet these very persons he convinces, that cowardice is not the motive of *his* conduct, nor true courage that of *theirs*; and comes off most exaltedly victorious. Yet still this is but an episode in what the world will call a romance; and therefore, though it will have a noble effect on some few, yet it will frequently fail of its due influence with those who read romances with a view to amusement only, without any consideration of the precept or example couched under them.

Thus

THUS far had this folly been canvassed by other authors. One method of handling it however still remained, which the author of the *Persian Letters* has in this dialogue made use of; viz. the throwing the custom itself into a ridiculous light, and pointing out to those practisers of it who build their vindication of it on a word which they have only learned by rote but by no means understand, that their *ideal honour* is *real infamy*, their *assumed courage* *intrinsic cowardice*, and their *method* of *vindication* but an *aggravation* of *offence*.

To answer this good end our author has perhaps fixed on the happiest idea imaginable: he has caused the shade of an Englishman killed in a *duel* to be met on the banks of the Styx by a North American Savage, who had lost his life by a musket-ball whilst out on a *scalping party*. The Englishman is supposed to have fallen by the hand of a friend, who, being in great want himself, had demanded a sum of money which he had
lent

lent to our interlocutor, who from a consciousness of his own being one of the best swordsmen in England, and a knowledge that his friend could not fence, sent him a challenge; but on their meeting being beat out of his play by the impetuosity of his ignorant antagonist, received a wound which put an end to his life, after having however mortally wounded his opponent; the consequence of which was that the wife of the latter died of her fright, and a family of seven children were left destitute and undone.

THE savage is a wild North American bred for some years amongst the English, but who on being cheated by some of them in a purchase, had returned to his own countrymen; yet had taken up the hatchet in favour of the English in this war with France, wherein he falls after having scalped seven men and five women and children.

THE character of this savage is very well supported, and is in my opinion the best drawn personage throughout the

course of this work. There are true satire and very pointed rebuke in many of his sentiments; his treatment of the Englishman is spirited and natural, and his refusing to cross the Styx in the same boat with him, notwithstanding the cruelties which the trade of war had accustomed him to, sets forth in a very just light the idea under which the error here endeavoured to be corrected must be conceived by uncorrupted nature, however barbarous. Besides this, the European's being obliged to put up with the being called a *scoundrel* and a *rascal*, with having the *lie* publicly given him, and with being severely *kicked*, adds greatly to the infamy and contempt which we could wish were constantly affixed to the name of a duellist: whilst the reason he himself assigns for not relenting this treatment; viz. "because
 " this shade appears twice as strong as
 " his" notwithstanding his having himself taken such infinite apparent odds of his antagonist from his skill in the sword, very seasonably implies how seldom the conduct of a common challenger is founded on the principles of real valour.

I HAVE dwelt the longer on this dialogue, first, as I look on it as one of the best in the whole collection, and secondly, from the importance the subject is of in itself. Yet there is one fault in it which I could have wished the noble author had avoided; and by which, from a too great zeal for the cause he espouses, he has in great measure weakened the force of his satire. Your own discernment will, I doubt not, immediately suggest to you that what I mean is his introducing into the character of his duellist almost every other ill quality; he appears to have been a gambler, a needy abuser of the generosity of his friend in pecuniary matters, a coward in point of manhood, and in respect of education and abilities answering to *Horatio's* description of another class of men:

*A dancing, skipping, worthless tribe ye are;
Fit only for yourselves.*

Rowe's *Fair Penitent*.

Now were such men only the promoters and practisers of this folly, the

F

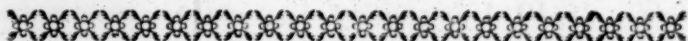
title

title of a duellist would then be synonymous with that of scoundrel and poltroon; they would, when known, be avoided by all civil society; and if they happened to fall in the infamous courses they chose to maintain, their deaths would be unlamented, nay, on the contrary, esteemed a just punishment for their offences; and if any worthier object lost his life in such a contest with one of them, he would no farther deserve, nor would he meet with more compassion for his fate, than if he had fallen a sacrifice in a brothel-squabble, or in the vindication of a gaming-quarrel. But as on the contrary it too frequently happens that men of the most valuable characters stand the most notoriously tainted with this epidemic frenzy, as men whose moral integrity, whose mental abilities, whose martial resolution might be most nobly serviceable to their country, whose lives, from principle, from duty, from inclination, are devoted, and would be joyfully laid down by them for her interest, are often known to lavish them away in a strumpet's vindication whom
they

they care not for, or in revenge for an idle word which false honour only has rendered infamous to bear; since this, I say, is so frequently the case, to these persons ought the *argumentum ad hominem* to be pointed; to the preservation of these lives should the remedy be applied; and to awaken them from their mistaken dream of a *false honour*, to which they sacrifice all the *true*, should be our chiefest aim.

THIS purpose then would probably have been fully answered had our duellist been made a gentleman of such a disposition. Such a one might have been represented as feeling the whole power of the reproaches, the whole justice of the arguments urged against his error, in the dreadful consideration of his having forfeited by a single act, in the opinion even of one worthy mind, the merit of a thousand noble actions, of a thousand amiable qualities: and this conducted by the same hand, and with the same spirit with the piece before us, might perhaps have had

a greater efficacy than all the preceding voluminous writers who have treated on the subject.

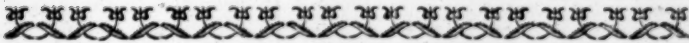


DIALOGUE VII.

PLINY the Elder—PLINY the Younger.

THIS dialogue consists wholly of a comparison between the conduct of the two speakers on occasion of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, in which the Elder PLINY lost his life. It consists for the most part of a recapitulation of the account given by the Younger PLINY in his Epistles of his own and his uncle's behaviour during that dreadful catastrophe; and tends to prove, that a steady and unruffled activity under calamity is greatly to be preferred before an assumed calmness and insensibility, “ which generally has more of
 “ valour in it than true magnanimity.—
 “ That to pretend insensibility when it
 “ cannot exist is ridiculous;” and “ that
 “ nothing is great that is unnatural and
 “ af-

“ affected.” The narration is made a pleasing and advantageous use of, and the subject on the whole treated in an easy and agreeable manner.



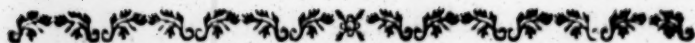
DIALOGUE VIII.

FERNANDO CORTEZ.

WILLIAM PENN.

THE speakers in this dialogue enter into a comparative disquisition in regard to the praise each deserved in the founding the several colonies they established in America. The contest seems to lie between the hypocrisy of fanaticism, and the cruel consequences of unrestrained bigotry and furious zeal. The preference in point of moral virtue is bestowed on PENN; yet, on the whole, the argument, if there is any to this dialogue, appears to be left intirely unconcluded.

DIA-



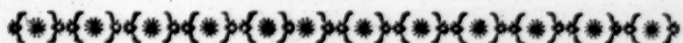
DIALOGUE IX.

MARCUS PORTIUS CATO.

MESSALA CORVINUS.

THE first idea of this dialogue appears to be nearly the same with that between the same *Cato* and *Cicero* in *Fenelon*. It begins with CATO's upbraiding MESSALA, the brave, the noble-minded, the virtuous MESSALA, for living the courtier of *Octavius*, and accepting of employments and honours from the tyrant of his country. In answer to this the accused urges his having taken every step in his power towards preserving the republic while she existed; and then proceeds to prove, which is the moral designed to be inculcated in this dialogue, that it is so far from disgraceful, that it may even sometimes be highly praise-worthy, to temporize with and assist certain measures of government, which though not intirely what they *ought* to be, are still the best that

that *can* be ; that it is better to *do some good* than to *project a great deal* ; and that a little practicable virtue is of more use to society, than the most sublime theory, or the best principles of government ill applied.



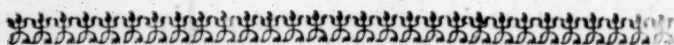
DIALOGUE X.

CHRISTINA, Queen of Sweden.

Chancellor OXENSTIERN.

THIS dialogue is a very rigid and severe condemnation of CHRISTINA for her resignation of the crown, and for traversing foreign courts in search of applause, and for the gratification of her vanity, instead of endeavouring to bring the muses to Sweden, and labouring to establish the arts and sciences amongst a people whom divine Providence had allotted to her the sovereignty and protection of.

DIA-



DIALOGUE XI.

TITUS VESPASIANUS.

PUBLIUS CORNELIUS SCIPIO AFRICANUS.

A PARALLEL between the celebrated continence of SCIPIO in giving back the Celtiberian captive, and the fortitude of TITUS in his voluntary separation from *Berenice*, is the plan of the dialogue before us. The preference is very justly given to the latter: the story of TITUS's situation with regard to his amiable mistress, as related by himself, is delicate and affecting; and the moral conveyed in this conference is, that *humanity* is superior to *heroism*, and that though *ambition* may render a character *greater*, true *sensibility* alone can make it more *virtuous*.

DIA-



DIALOGUE XII.

HENRY Duke of GUISE—MACHIABEL.

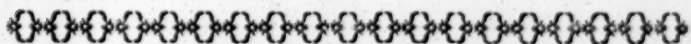
THE heavy accusations thrown by the duke of GUISE on the Italian politician in this dialogue, and his defence of himself, which seems however too apparently intended to be weak, contain very little new, and are only a recapitulation of the arguments which have been frequently made use of to prove the pernicious and detestable consequences of that statesman's almost infernal doctrines. Any investigation or *critique* on those arguments would be as tedious as unnecessary; I shall therefore not enter into any such; but as the most forcible argument in the world is that of a positive example, I cannot here avoid transcribing the words with which the noble author, in the character of the duke of GUISE, closes the dialogue; first, as they are the strongest answer to all the partisans of Machiavelian policy, and secondly,

G

condly, as they contain an elegant and just compliment to two monarchs whose praises can never be too frequently repeated.

“ I HAVE been told (says the duke) by
 “ some shades arrived lately here, that a
 “ king, with whose fame all Europe re-
 “ sounds, has answered your book, and
 “ confuted your doctrines with a most
 “ noble air of scorn and abhorrence. I
 “ am also told, that in England there is a
 “ great and good king, *whose whole life*
 “ *has been a continued opposition to your evil*
 “ *system*; who has hated all cruelty, all
 “ fraud, all dissimulation; whose word
 “ has been sacred, whose honour invio-
 “ late; who has made the laws of his
 “ kingdom the rules of his government,
 “ and good faith and a regard for the li-
 “ berty of mankind the principles of his
 “ conduct to foreign powers; who reigns
 “ more absolutely now in the hearts of
 “ his people, and does greater things by
 “ the confidence they place in him, and
 “ by the efforts they make from the zeal
 “ of

“ of affection, than any prince ever did
 “ or ever will do, by all the arts of ini-
 “ quity you recommended.”



DIALOGUE XIII.

VIRGIL — HORACE — MERCURY.

SCALIGER the Elder.

I CANNOT help thinking this dialogue a very trifling one: it begins with a scene of alternate compliments and disqualifying speeches between the two poets, which is interrupted by MERCURY'S introducing JULIUS CÆSAR SCALIGER; under whose name the character of a mere snarling opiniated critic is endeavoured to be represented, who after being pretty well *roasted* and *humbugged* by the poets, has his eyes opened by MERCURY, or rather, as the god himself expresses it, receives from him “ *what nature denied him*, a rational judgment;” in consequence of which he falls at once into a penitential reverie, in which he asserts his own cha-

rafter to be a “ head stuffed with a *lumber* of learning, a *little* petulant wit, “ and *no* sense :” and acknowledges himself unfit for the company of VIRGIL or HORACE.

I MUST confess it gives me some degree of pain to find myself obliged to stand in opposition to a gentleman of our author’s abilities, in a point in which opinion rather than fact must be our guide. Had he only introduced a nameless critic in this place, with all the arrogance, with all the ignorance, with all the self-conceit, and with all the servility that he has here bestowed on this personage of his dialogue, I should have readily subscribed to his painting, and agreed with him, that out of hundreds of the common herd of critics any one might have sat for the picture, and the likeness would still have been striking. But why should this idea be affixed on a man to whom, amidst all his failings of temper and disposition, we are certainly indebted for many useful lights? The age, the country which SCALIGER wrote in,
are

are excuses for great part of his prolixity and minuteness; but surely his immense fund of erudition was not in itself a fault; an *intire deprivation* of sense could not have either acquired or employed that erudition; and if some little petulance might mingle with his wit, a mind of more wit and less petulance might surely grant to it that allowance, which the infirmities of human nature demand from every one.

IN short, though I am very far from placing mere critics in the highest rank of authors, yet I am as far from classing them with the lowest, and so greatly am I averse to the throwing any degree of contempt upon them, that I must own the *fame* they *can* at the most *acquire*, bears so small a proportion with the *labour* they *must* at the best *undergo*; that I am apt to look on them as the most disinterested and public-spirited race of mortals; and whilst by the means of an *Eustathius*, a *Scaliger*, a *Burmamnus*, or a *Minellius*, my peculiar path to the understanding of a *Homer*, a *Virgil*, or an *Horace*, is rendered easier,
and

and less incumbered, what business is it of mine to consider whether the *critic* has treated the *author* with that *decorum* and *respect* which I myself may think he deserves, and therefore unbiassedly bestow upon him?



DIALOGUE XIV.

BOILEAU—POPE.

THIS is I believe the longest dialogue in the whole work: but as it consists merely of observations on the poets of the two nations, it is impossible to do more than recommend it to your own perusal, at the same time wishing that less of the “*common-place sentiment of Cambray*” had been made use of in it, as on the strictest examination I can perceive nothing throughout the whole of it which can lay a claim to novelty but the author’s poetical manner of expressing the characteristic distinctions of *Racine* and *Corneille*; which for that reason I cannot avoid pointing out
to

to your observance—" *Racine* (says he) is
 " the swan described by the antient poets,
 " which rises on downy wings to the
 " clouds, and sings a sweet, but a gentle
 " and plaintive note. *Corneille* is the
 " eagle which soars to the skies on bold
 " and sounding pinions, and fears not to
 " perch on the sceptre of *Jupiter*, or bear
 " in his pounces the lightning of the
 " gods."



DIALOGUE XV.

OCTAVIA—PORTIA—ARRIA.

THE parallel drawn in this dialogue is between three women, of whom the two last have been generally esteemed to hold a much higher rank in point of conjugal merit than the first. The one on the news of her husband's distress swallowed fire; the other put an end to her own life to free herself from the pain of surviving an husband who had been doomed to death by the decree of a tyrant. These
 suffered

suffered voluntarily for husbands who loved, who would have died for them; but OCTAVIA, tho' with a less dazzling, yet with a more intrinsic fortitude, endured the slights of a man whose fortunes she in some measure had established; a man who had left her for one whose very *personal* charms were not superior to those of his wife, and who not only abandoned himself intirely to this mistress, but at the same time threw every mark of coldness and contempt, nay even of infamy on her who had the rightful claim to his affections: yet did this woman, in the midst of all her wrongs, instead of exerting that revenge which was in her power, plead with her brother for this rebel-husband, cherish even the children he had by his mistress as she would have done her own; and in a word, acted by him with the same tenderness and conjugal duty as if her *Antony* had been a *Brutus* or a *Thraseas Pætus*. The preference, after she has told her own story, is readily granted to her by her rivals in fame, as it must universally

sally be by every rational and sensible judge: but for that very reason,

*There needs no ghost, my Lord, come from
the grave
To tell us this.*

IN short, why should the pen of a L—
L—, through the space of eight or nine
pages, be employed, or the judgment of
a *Minos* be called in, to pronounce a sen-
tence which any school-boy of a twelve-
month's standing, who should be informed
of the circumstances of their several sto-
ries, would determine on without the least
hesitation? *Parturiunt montes* still, say I.



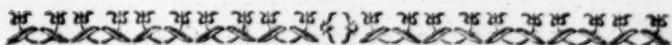
DIALOGUE XVI.

LOUISE DE COLIGNI, Princess of
ORANGE--FRANCES WALSINGHAM,
Countess of Essex and Clanrickard;
before Lady SIDNEY.

THIS dialogue is very nearly of the
same tenor with the foregoing, with this
difference only, that the particular on
H which

which the conjugal affection of the former ladies was made to turn, was during the lives of their husbands; that of these ladies is put to the test after the death of their respective partners. Each of them had been successively married to two men of heroic characters; after the decease of whom the first, disdaining the thought of admitting to her arms any man of inferior merit to her former husbands, and at the same time convinced that she could not fix on any one equal to either of them, condemned herself to a lasting widowhood, contented with the care of educating a son left to her by her last husband. The other however, fixing her third choice on a man with fewer *turbulent*, but many more *domestic* virtues than either of her former two, enjoyed with the last, in a calm, easy retirement, a degree of happiness which the bustle attendant on the acquiring an exalted fame, deprived her other partners of the power either of relishing themselves, or bestowing on her. The comparative merits of the two ladies however the author has not attempted to deter-

determine, which, till he thinks proper to do, my judgment in regard to his opinion must remain equally indeterminate.



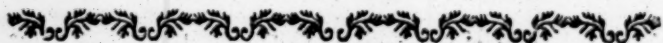
DIALOGUE XVII.

MARCUS BRUTUS.

POMPONIUS ATTICUS.

THIS dialogue is somewhat of the same nature with the Ninth; BRUTUS in this laying the same accusation to his friend ATTICUS's charge of surviving and temporizing, that CATO does to CICERO's in in that. The author however has, in the character of ATTICUS, very carefully investigated how far the assassination of *Cæsar* was in itself an *imprudent* and *ill-judged* act: the reasons he has advanced in proof of this assertion display a great store of historical learning, and bespeak a clear and judicious idea of the state of the Roman affairs at that time. BRUTUS's *principle* in that action however seems to have his admiration; and what appears somewhat

contradictory to itself, he very apparently gives this preference to BRUTUS, after proving him rash and mistaken, notwithstanding he has represented the character of ATTICUS as composed of every amiable quality, tempered and guided by the most rational and laudable discretion.



DIALOGUE XVIII.

WILLIAM III. King of England.
JOHN DE WITT, Pensioner of Holland.

HAD this dialogue, which is extremely long, been intitled a panegyric on King WILLIAM, it would certainly have been very justly named, as on either side of the conversation *that* is the point kept equally in view by both of the speakers. The same spirit of political erudition runs thro' this as thro' the last, and in general with an apparent air of clearness and candour; yet I cannot, dear Sir, avoid pointing out to you one observation with which the dialogue closes, which therefore it seems
the

the author's favourite intention to cultivate, and which yet appears to glance, although but *obliquely*, at some parts of the conduct of the affairs of BRITAIN under the present happy administration.

“ I acknowledge (says he) that the re-
 “ sources of a commercial country which
 “ knows how to support its commerce by
 “ great and powerful fleets, and to raise
 “ its taxes in a way not hurtful to trade,
 “ are immense and beyond what could
 “ be conceived till the trial is made: but
 “ yet an *unlimited* and *continued* expence
 “ will in the end so weaken a nation,
 “ that it must sink under the weight;
 “ and then its independence cannot be
 “ maintained. What matters it, whether
 “ a state is mortally wounded by the hand
 “ of a foreign enemy, or dies by a con-
 “ sumption of its own vital strength?
 “ Such a consumption will come upon
 “ Holland sooner than upon England,
 “ because the latter has a greater radical
 “ force; but great as it is, that force
 “ may be so diminished at last by per-
 petual

“petual drains that it may fail all at once,
 “and what may appear its most *vigorous*
 “*efforts*, may in reality be the *convulsions*
 “*of death*. I don’t apply this to your
 “majesty’s government; but I speak with
 “a view to what I foresee may happen
 “hereafter, from the extensive ideas of
 “negotiation and war which you have
 “established: they have been salutary to
 “your kingdom, but they will be pernicious,
 “in future times, if in pursuing
 “great plans great ministers do not act
 “with a sobriety and a prudence, which
 “seldom are joined with an extraordinary
 “vigour and boldness of counsels.”



DIALOGUE XIX.

M. APICIUS—DARTENEUF.

THIS conversation between two men,
 the one of antient, the other of modern
 times, and both remarkable for the spirit
 of gluttony and epicurism, seems intended
 by the right honourable author to set his
 readers a longing for dainties that he at
 the

the same time lets them know are out of the reach of any fortune under that of a monarch to attain to: yet under favour, methinks, this making ghosts talk with so high a *gout* of good eating is not much unlike what it would be to introduce two Italian heroes of the opera mutually complaining to each other of their unhappiness in not having lived in the times of *Helen*, *Cleopatra*, *Thais*, or *Fryne*.

GREAT pains has indeed been taken in this dialogue to collect together an accurate account and calculation of what it cost *Lucullus* and *Æsopus* to keep a good table, and of the money laid out in eating in the blessed reigns of *Caligula*, *Vitellius*, and *Heliogabalus*: this would certainly be most miserably tantalizing the *true virtuos* in luxurious living, were they not in some measure relieved from their pain by an after proof brought by M. DARTENEUF, that with all this immense expence these voluptuous antients had not one single thing at their tables worth eating, nor a glass of any kind of liquor that could be
drank

drank by a modern of *genuine taste*. The praises of *turtle* are indeed founded to a very lofty pitch; but to the great consolation of those who cannot reach the price of these kind of dainties, Mr. MERCURY comes in and informs the speakers that a Spartan soldier with his black broth, and an English farmer with his beef and pudding, when urged to eat by the fatigues of hardy exercise and wholesome labour, had more true relish and enjoyment in their food, than could be tasted by stomachs always overcharged, and which never felt real hunger. --- O wonderful discovery! Nor are the two aphorisms with which the dialogue concludes of much less importance than the former; viz. That it is possible *true notions of pleasure* may not *wholly* consist in notions of eating; and that if a man does not know what *good living* is before he is *dead*—why then—he had as well not know it at all!!!

DIA-



DIALOGUE XX.

ALEXANDER the Great.

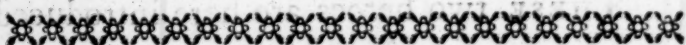
CHARLES XII. King of Sweden.

THESE two heroes are here introduced in a warm contest with regard to the rank which their respective characters should give them in the esteem of mankind. Mutual accusations of each other for acts of cruelty, arrogance, and madness, make up the greatest part of the dialogue; in which however the author seems strongly to favour the Macedonian chief: but at length, instead of terminating the dispute by an acknowledged inferiority on either side; it closes at once very abruptly with ALEXANDER's declaring that the Czar *Peter* the Great deserved the preference in fame of CHARLES XII. king of Sweden. Whether this is intended as a tacit acknowledgement of his own being inferior to either of them, I own I am at a loss to discover; but I cannot help thinking the

I

manner

manner of argument is not very unlike the replies which occur in playing at cross-purposes; where some third point, intirely independent of the original question or answer, is tacked to the former, and given in the place of the latter.



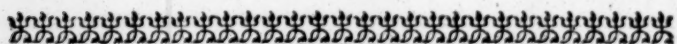
DIALOGUE XXI.

Cardinal XIMENES—Cardinal WOLSEY.

OF the last of these two prelates, every Englishman who knows the least of his own country's history has been so thoroughly informed, that nothing can be necessary to say of it in this place: the other cardinal was chief favourite and minister of *Isabella* queen of *Castile*, and afterwards regent of that kingdom. This dialogue is, like most in this collection, merely comparative; and in this instance, as in some others among them, the comparison is so very apparent, so glaringly evident, that it is rather to be wondered at that a gentleman of abilities should think
it

it worth his while to spend the least pains to prove what every person was before thoroughly convinced of, than that he should be unable to throw any fresh lights on what was already so extremely clear. The ambitious views of Cardinal WOLSEY, the means by which he so deeply insinuated himself into his sovereign's favour, his hopes of purchasing the Papal chair, and the insolence and arrogance with which he treated all his opponents, are facts which no one can pretend to be ignorant of: and that a character of this kind must unquestionably fall vastly inferior to that of a man whom a monastic course of life had impressed with a disposition towards forbearance and self-denial, had inspired with a moderation in his views and a calmness in his actions, and divested of every inclination that might tend towards an accumulation of wealth, or personal aggrandizement, is what at least no man of either understanding or integrity will attempt to deny: yet are these points all that seems aimed at in this dialogue, which even

loses the greatest part of the merit it might lay claim to from a *nouvelle* arrangement; since almost all the facts on which these doctrines are built in this work, are to be met with in M. FENELON'S conversation between the same Cardinal XIMENES and Cardinal RICHLIEU*; to which this before us has in the general tenor of it but too much resemblance, and to which I must therefore refer you.



DIALOGUE XXII.

LUCIAN—RABELAIS.

It would perhaps be a very difficult task to discover what the author particularly aims at in this dialogue: both his speakers were men of great wit and great freedom in opinion. Both of them attempted rather to laugh the follies of the age they lived in out of doors by smart,

* Dialogues des Morts Modernes, Dial. xvii.

but

yet tickling satire, than to preach them into wisdom by dint of grave and serious argument: they both wrote works of great merit in the more beaten paths of science, which were wholly neglected, and are almost intirely forgotten; and yet established a deathless fame on pieces of mere wit and invention. And lastly, they both alike made the tricks of priestcraft and the absurdities of superstition the principal butt of their satire.

SUCH are the two gentlemen who are here introduced in a chit-chat on the merits and motives of their respective works; a chit-chat which really terminates in nothing at all, unless it should be brought to prove, which I can scarcely think the author could mean by it, that the comic works of both these authors were no more than "*ragouts of folly well dressed with a sharp sauce of wit.*"



DIALOGUE XXIII.

PERICLES — COSMO DE MEDICIS, the
first of that name.

THE parallel drawn between these two men is intirely political. In this, as in all the other dialogues of this kind, as I have before observed, the author has shewn himself perfectly master of the respective histories of the persons he has selected out as speakers, of the countries where they resided, and of the transactions they were concerned in: these, as far as the length of a dialogue would permit, he has with great ease and freedom of manner introduced to his design; yet, notwithstanding these dialogues are considerably longer than those of the archbishop of *Cambray*, he has generally either found them still too short to wind up his intended decision of character, or has intentionally avoided determining on them himself; submitting a series of facts to the attention

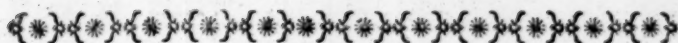
tion of his readers, reserving to them the right of judging for themselves with regard to them.

It is very seldom therefore that he has taken on himself that right; and even in the piece before us, although it takes up near twenty pages, the two characters appear so equal, so very near in point of comparison, that it would be difficult to guess which was the author's favourite, were it not for the last speech, in which PERICLES acknowledges his inferiority in rank, not indeed to COSMO in particular, but to all "those who have governed republics or limited monarchies, not merely with concern for their *present* advantage, but with a prudent regard to that *balance of power* on which their *permanent happiness* always depends."

BUT the faults of PERICLES' administration, as it appears throughout the course of the dialogue, were owing intirely to the effects of that *ostracism*, which as he himself observes was a foul blemish in
the

the Athenian constitution. It would therefore appear much more just to place those faults to the charge of that blemish, than of a man who “ had *preserved* the most “ *perfect integrity* and *exerted the greatest* “ *virtues* in his *whole public conduct*,” but who failed in some points which he had projected from want of ability to rectify that error in the constitution.

I own therefore that the decisive period I have quoted above, seemed to me, by a deduction from this last consideration, to mean somewhat more than it directly implies, and may be supposed to have somewhat of the same tenor with what I hinted at in regard to a passage which you will find commented on in my remarks on the Eighteenth Dialogue. This however, dear Sir, I submit intirely to your own judgment when you come to read the Dialogues; and if I should appear to be mistaken, I must intreat your pardon for taking up your time with groundless surmises, and my noble author's, for finding out meanings in his words which he himself did not intend they should convey.



DIALOGUE XXIV.

LOCKE—BAYLE.

THIS dialogue is a very sensible, modest, and judicious defence of Mr. LOCKE'S system, against the attacks of the free-thinkers and deists. Mr. BAYLE is here introduced pleading in a very few words every thing that can be urged in vindication of that libertinism of principles which he has suffered to intermingle itself with all his writings; whilst all the arguments put into the mouth of Mr. LOCKE, to confute that doctrine, are clear, elegant, concise, and at the same time as fully sufficient to evince the fatal and pernicious consequences of *scepticism*, more especially when its cause is espoused by men of wit and great abilities, in whose hands the bright sword of ridicule is ever made a weapon of universal attack, which under pretence of striking at the rank weeds of *falsehood* only, yet with a motion

K

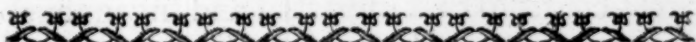
almost

almost imperceptible dazzles the eyes of the weak-sighted vulgar, while it cuts down indiscriminately the fair flower of *truth*, and leaves it blended with them to rot on the dunghill of *bigotry* and *absurdity*.

IT is perhaps scarce possible to form a more lively picture of the race of modern free-thinkers and their manner of arguing, nor a stronger confutation of that disposition, than is given by our author in the following passage, put into the mouth of the great Mr. LOCKE.

“ THEY recommend themselves (says
 “ he) to warm and ingenuous minds by
 “ lively strokes of reason and wit, against
 “ priestcraft, superstition, fanaticism, en-
 “ thusiasm; but at the same time they
 “ insidiously throw the colours of these
 “ upon the fair face of true religion, and
 “ dress her out in their garb, with an in-
 “ tention to render her odious to those
 “ who have not penetration enough to
 “ discover the cheat: yet it is certain, no
 “ book

“ book that ever was writ by the most
 “ acute of these gentlemen, is so repug-
 “ nant to priestcraft, to spiritual tyranny,
 “ to all weak superstitions of every kind,
 “ to all that can tend to disturb or to pre-
 “ judice human society, as *that* which
 “ they so much affect to despise.”



DIALOGUE XXV.

ARCHIBALD Earl of DOUGLAS, Duke
 of Touraine—JOHN Duke of ARGYLE
 and GREENWICH, Field Marshal of his
 Britannic Majesty's Forces.

THE tendency of this dialogue is a very
 amiable and noble one, and its subject, as
 more domestic, so consequently more im-
 portant to the British reader than any other
 of those which are written on political
 subjects: its intention is to set forth, and
 it has done so in a very clear and candid
 light, the great advantages resulting to
 both kingdoms from the union between
England and Scotland; and to evince the

falsity of any argument which supposes *France* by any means the natural ally of the Scotch: the reasons for such an union, the bars which stood in the way of bringing it about, and the happy effects produced by it to the more northern of the two nations, are clearly stated. The character he has given the Scotch nation does great credit to that impartial and ingenuous disposition in the author, which can only reside in a good and noble mind, and which looks on the persons of every country as citizens of the world, and intitled to the just commendation which their virtues would receive from it were they natives of the same spot, or had even

Twinn'd with us both in a birth.

THE passage is so spirited, and at the same time pays so just a compliment to both nations, that I cannot help pointing it out to you more particularly in this place: it is as follows;

“ THE Scotch were not made to be
 “ subject to England: their souls were
 “ too

“ too great, their spirit was too high for
 “ such a dependence : but they may *unite*
 “ and *incorporate* with a nation they
 “ would not *obey*. Their generous scorn
 “ of a foreign yoke, their strong love of
 “ independence and freedom, made their
 “ union with England more natural and
 “ more proper : had the spirit of the
 “ Scotch been servile or base, it could
 “ not have coalited with that of the Eng-
 “ lish.”

THE compliment paid to his present
 Majesty, in respect to moderation shewn to-
 wards Scotland since the suppression of the
 last rebellion there, is as elegant as it is
 deserved ; and no natural argument can be
 more forcible than our author’s conclud-
 ing one, for continuing and zealously pro-
 moting the principles of the union. “ To
 “ resist the union, says DOUGLAS, is in-
 “ deed to rebel against nature : nature
 “ has joined the two countries, has fenced
 “ them both with the sea against the in-
 “ vasion of all other nations ; but has laid
 “ them quite open the one to the other.
 “ Ac-

“ Accursed be he who tries to divide
 “ them!—*What GOD has joined, let no*
 “ *man put asunder.*”

ON the whole, this dialogue is a very useful lecture to the individual natives of each of those two countries, thus united by nature and incorporated by legislative authority, to throw aside all nationality and personal prejudice, to esteem each other as members of one society, as brothers of one family, and to consider each other's interests to be as closely, as inseparably connected as they could be, even by that solemn tie, to the very essence of whose institution, from the time of the creation itself, the text above quoted was so immediately applied.

AND now, Sir, as I have got intirely through that series of these dialogues which stands confessedly the work of the author of the *Persian Letters*, I cannot avoid stopping in this place to make some general observations on what we have passed through, before I proceed to the
 three

three concluding dialogues, which we are told, and which indeed very plainly appear, to be executed by another hand.

IN the first place then, next to the deficiency in respect to the supporting of character, which I have particularly hinted at towards the beginning of these remarks, there is also a very considerable want of variety in the choice of subjects; a variety which is even necessary, when instruction is aimed at under the sanction and idea of amusement.

To prove that this charge of want of variety is not rashly advanced, it will be only needful to compare the Third, Fourth, Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Twenty-second of these dialogues: all which are discourses between different writers, containing either an ostentatious boast of their own abilities, a servile and unbecoming flattery to each other, or a set of unconnected, yet common-place, critical remarks on the works of others. The distinct merits of all those writers have been very carefully

fully canvassed long ago, and so amply, that the world in general seems to have consented in establishing such and such stations in the lists of fame, as have driven all kind of contest and dispute about them intirely out of doors: unless, therefore, some opinion in regard to them could be advanced, which might contradict the general and established one, might pluck down some idol that false taste had set up as the object of universal adoration, from its elevated throne of cloud-built pageantry, or raise from out the grotto of obscurity into the sunshine of applause some concealed genius which modesty had first obscured, and stupidity had wanted sight to discover: unless, I say, some such heroic exploit in literature was to be performed, what need was there for marshalling into the field such a regiment of small and hackneyed remarks which, amongst a great deal of mere common conversation, like the goods in *Shakespear's* apothecary's shop,

Are thinly scatter'd to make up a shew.

THAT

THAT SWIFT exceeded ADDISON in keenness of humour, as much as he was excelled by him in delicacy and purity; that MILTON is inimitably sublime, yet sometimes rather deficient in point of correct regularity; that the immorality and prophaneness of some of DRYDEN'S writings have obscured the vast merit of his others; that PRIOR had a great resemblance to FONTAINE; that SPENSER'S allegorical manner is more tiresome to the reader than the bold and undisguised narrative of an *epic* poem; that THOMSON is elegantly *descriptive*, but *obscure* and *redundant* in his diction; that WALLER was a fine writer, but at the same time a very unequal one; and that COWLEY possessed great imagination with very little judgment. All these observations, I say, are far from new; they are what must occur to every who has read those authors with taste and attention: these therefore we needed not to be informed of.

HAD our noble author, instead of this, endeavoured to convince his readers of the

L

error

error which this age is but too apt to run into of undervaluing itself, and esteeming that genius lost which is still flourishing in great perfection amongst them; had he pointed out to them, that in the works of a YOUNG, a MASON, a GRAY, and a SHENSTONE, we still retained the spirit of *contemplative*, of *pindaric*, of *elegiac*, and of *pastoral* poetry, in as full dignity and as delicate simplicity, as perhaps they ever existed in this nation: had he, instead of blaming Mr. POPE for condescending to make himself an editor to our prince of dramatic poets, in doing which his only condescension was the lending his name to an edition which he thought it not worth his while to pay a sufficient attention to the revising of, shewed what abundance of new lights the world had a right to expect concerning that author; what advantages it has a prospect of reaping from the poetical genius of the great Mr. JOHNSON, who with powers of language, with harmony of numbers, and force of sentiment in his own writings, which will ever rank them with the first

rate

rate poetry of our nation, has nevertheless considered it by no means beneath him to bestow the labour of some years on clearing up many of those obscurities which, like spots on the face of the sun, though they do not indeed impair the immense brightness with which he shines, yet cannot escape the eye of the accurate observer, nor avoid exciting a desire in him to see them removed.

HAD his L—— then represented these and many other particulars of a like kind, which could not escape his penetration or be wanting to his superior imagination; or had he, accommodating himself in some measure to the prevailing taste of writing of this century, entered into the peculiar merits of living authors, pointed out their several perfections and faults, and established from such comparison a standard for fine writing or judicious criticism, adapted to the period we live in, he would at least have sallied out of the beaten path, and given a novelty and variety to these dialogues which, as they

stand at present, are so much of the same colour, as scarcely to differ in any essential point from one another.

So likewise in the parallels he has drawn between different princes, in the Second, Twentieth, and Twenty-third dialogues, there is a kind of *monotony of manner*, if the expression may be allowed me, which tires the reader, and makes him less inclinable to pursue a subject in one place, which he has apparently exhausted in another; whereas had *contrast* rather than *parallel* been more aimed at, or in some cases the former alone, in others the latter, the dialogue might have been rendered more spirited, the opportunities for drawing character would have fallen more naturally, the argumentative part of the conversation might have been more energetic, and the whole would have become more fit to keep up the attention of the reader; more especially of many of those readers into whose hands this book must fall, and for whose instruction it seems most particularly intended; that is

to

to say, for those “ *to whom a new dress
“ may make an old truth more pleasing,
“ and whom the mere love of novelty betrays
“ into error*.*”

I SHALL mention only one instance more of this sameness, this seeming want of invention in this work, and that is in the three dialogues Numb. V. XV. and XVI. In all of which he has drawn the characters of amiable and extraordinary wives. There is indeed a considerable difference in their circumstances; yet still his PENELOPE, his OCTAVIA, and his Lady CLANRICKARD, the respective favourites of each dialogue, are but too much alike. All these are women of mild, gentle, and submissive disposition, strongly sensible of the duty required of them, but unapt to be hurried away by the violence of romantic ardor, like an ARRIA or a PORTIA, incapable of submitting to the warm desires of a CIRCE, and undazzled by the

* See Preface to the Dialogues of the Dead, p. iv.

pride of a LOUISE DE COLIGNI : there might be a want of *feeling* in the virtue of these ; but there is a female character which history has afforded us frequent examples of, and which ought undoubtedly to stand in a still higher rank of conjugal commendation, which is that of a wife, who with the greatest violence of temper, with the utmost constitutional warmth of disposition, endures almost without complaining the unkindness of a husband, and the assurance of a rival ; can resist the temptations of a lover, and even suffer distressful circumstances of other kinds, occasioned solely by the falsehood and ill behaviour of her husband. — That there are such, let *some* of the husbands of this age bear witness ; that any such should continue so injured, let them *all* blush to reflect.

HAD then such a character as this been introduced, or had a striking instance of conjugal merit on the other side of the question been made the hero of some dialogue, the same deficiency of various dishes
in

in a feast, which should be calculated to suit every taste, would I think in great measure have been avoided.

ANOTHER particular, which I must own occurs to me as a fault, is the having rendered political, metaphysical, and critical investigations the aim and butt of much the greater part of them. Dialogues of this kind should certainly tend to material and essential instruction. Now in respect to the motives of the actions of princes, the causes of great revolutions, the characters of ministers, and the secret springs of government, the extent of a dialogue of only twenty or thirty pages may indeed admit of general ideas, but can never be sufficient for the entering into any particular disquisitions fit either for the improvement of those who are masters of the subject, or for the implanting the rudiments of it with sufficient clearness in the minds of the before uninformed. Of the like kind are metaphysics and criticism; they must either be very extensive and explicit, or they convey nothing worth
our

our reading for; yet are there at least eighteen dialogues out of the twenty-five which turn intirely upon one of these three subjects.

Now if it had happened to have occurred to the author, that in the course of common and domestic life there are ten thousand little errors, as many follies, as many vitiated customs, which are productive of infinite mischiefs to society in general, and to individuals in particular; that these are frequently so trivial in reality, though powerful in consequence, that the gentlest glance in the mirror of reflection, the slightest stroke from the scourge of ridicule, would at once make them be seen and corrected: it must have been apparent to him, that dialogues even much shorter than those before us would have been sufficient to have painted them in strong and striking colours.

OF these kinds of subjects what an infinite variety might have been selected by the eye of observation from the scenes
pro-

produced by mistaken conduct in love, in friendship, in social intercourse, and in conjugal ties! What a scope would they have afforded for character, for spirit, and for the exertion of humour and raillery! and what valuable effects might not such a work produce, in which FOLLY should have been laughed into a *conscious blush*, and CONFIDENCE hooted into a *deserved confusion*!

AFTER all that I have now said of the faults of this work, whose noble sanction and whose great success alone has rendered it so conspicuously an object of criticism, it is undoubtedly a piece of justice due to its esteemed author, to acknowledge that in many respects he has very great merit; a large share of political understanding, a very clear discernment, and an unbiassed judgment, shine through the whole of the abstrusest subjects that he has handled in it; and it may be truly said that he has taken in as particular disquisitions on every point, as the narrow limits the nature of his work had prescribed to him would admit of.

M

As

As to the dialogue, though not so dramatically characteristic as it could be wished, or even as the preface seems to authorize our expectation of, yet it is easy and unaffected, free from any unnatural flights or forced flowers, yet never falling below that elegance which ever distinguishes the man of real from him of feigned abilities. In short, the author has written like a gentleman, but he has not laboured as an adept: he is pleasing, but not great; and though the plan might be too much for a writer of less abilities to execute, the execution is too little for one of such acknowledged abilities to have suffered to pass from his hand without more attention and correction: it appears to have been the *passé tems* of leisure hours, rather than the business of studied retirement; it shews us what we might have reason to expect, and which therefore it points out to us a kind of claim to, from such talents and so clear a judgment. Might these few hints but be found deserving to excite an emulation in the same author to favour the world with some more finished piece, either

ther in this or any other way of writing, I should esteem my labour in this little essay amply rewarded, in being but a secondary means of procuring such a pleasure to my fellow-countrymen.

WOULD the limits of a letter, which has already stretched to but too great a length, permit my proceeding farther, I could enter into many particular details on different parts of this work, both in the way of praise and censure; but as I believe I have already pretty well tired you, I shall here close this part of my design, and proceed to the little which remains; which is some examination of the three heterogeneous dialogues which terminate the whole, and which are the workmanship of another hand. In regard to them I shall pursue the same method I have followed as to the former part, by first giving you some account of each separately, and then closing the whole with general observations and remarks.



DIALOGUE XXVI.

CADMUS—HERCULES.

THE contrast here maintained lies between two heroes; one of whom had established his fame by the achievement of great and amazing actions, and by encountering and surmounting, with the utmost hardiness, the most apparently invincible difficulties: the other had fixed the happiness of nations by civilizing mankind and the introducing arts and sciences amongst them.

THE first of these, namely HERCULES, an absolute enemy to all effeminacy, or any thing that may seem to bear the least tendency towards inactivity or idleness, lays heavily to the charge of letters and science the encouraging a sedentary life only, and the inducing men “to lose the “ hours of youth and action in idle speculation and the sport of words.”

CADMUS

CADMUS in opposition to this urges, that literature has certainly been one of the greatest encouragements imaginable to great and heroic deeds, since the ambition of being registred in the annals of fame has been the strongest incitement to noble actions. He also points out the very great aids which heroism has received even in its powers, from men whose inactive lives and studious dispositions have never permitted them to leave their closets; instancing in the arts of navigation, the invention of the compass, and the knowledge of mechanical powers, and enters into a detail of the great advantages which have accrued to man in general, and how greatly he has been exalted as an individual, as a being, from the increase of science in the world, by the encouragement it has given, and at the same time the restraint and moderation it has taught, to heroic virtues.

THE reply made to this by HERCULES, together with CADMUS's answer, as they contain several very just observations, and an ingenious vindication of learning in
general

general from the charge of particular misapplication, and of being the cause of luxury, and may besides serve as a specimen of the manner of this author's writing, I shall here give you at length.

HERCULES.

“THE true spirit of heroism acts by a sort of inspiration, and wants neither the experience of history, nor the doctrine of philosophers, to direct it: but do not arts and sciences render men effeminate, luxurious, and inactive? and can you deny, that wit and learning are often made subservient to very bad purposes?”

CADMUS.

“I WILL own that there are some natures so happily formed, they hardly want the assistance of a master and the rules of art to give them force and grace in every thing they do: but these heaven-inspired geniuses are few! As learning flourishes only where ease, plenty, and mild government subsist, in so rich a soil, and under
so

so soft a climate, the weeds of luxury will spring up among the flowers of art ; but the spontaneous weeds would grow more rank if they were allowed the undisturbed possession of the field. Letters keep a frugal, temperate nation from growing ferocious, a rich one from becoming intirely sensual and debauched. Every gift of the gods is sometimes abused ; but wit and fine talents by a natural law gravitate towards virtue ; accidents may drive them out of their proper direction ; but such accidents are a sort of prodigies, and, like other prodigies, it is an alarming omen, and of dire portent to the times : for if virtue cannot keep to her allegiance those men, who in their hearts confess her divine right, and know the value of her law, on whose fidelity and obedience can she depend ? May such geniuses never descend to flatter vice, encourage folly, or propagate irreligion ; but exert all their powers in the service of virtue, and celebrate the noble choice of those who, like you, preferred her to pleasure."

FROM

FROM this example of the unknown author's stile and manner, it is easy to perceive that he is a very great master of the pen: his subject is well digested, and as well conducted, his sentiments strong and nervous, and his periods full and harmonious. The cause he has undertaken in this dialogue is a very judicious and generous one; namely, to rescue injured science from accusations which frequently of late, and that with a degree of sophistry very sufficient to gloss over the truth from minds of little discernment, have been brought against her; accusations which might prove of the most dreadful consequences, as the discouraging of genius, and denying to literary qualifications their real merit, tends strongly towards the banishing of all useful knowledge, and restoring the reigns of Gothic barbarism and ignorance.

D I A-



DIALOGUE XXVII.

MERCURY—A modern fine LADY.

THE dialogue now under my consideration is so intirely free from the fault I have pointed out in the generality of these discourses, of wanting character and dramatic expression, that I even think it might very safely stand the test of the stage, and that the character of Mrs. MODISH, in the hands of a *Pritchard* or a *Miss Macklin*, would give opportunity for great exertions both of action and elocution (and this indeed ought to be the *criterion* of this way of writing). She is a mere negative agent, and seems to confirm Mr. POPE's sentiment, that

Most women have no character at all.

YET is that *negativeness* strongly painted; the satire conveyed in it, on a disposition but too fashionable at present, is poignant and forcible; her language is

N

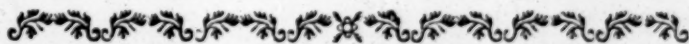
well

well suited to the description she gives of herself, yet mingled with no absurdity, nor interlarded with an ignorance and affectation which cannot subsist compatibly with a familiarity of acquaintance with the polite world. In short, let this lady be set in comparison with the so much admired *fine Lady* in *LETHE*, she will certainly appear greatly to deserve the preference.

HER negative account of herself under the idea of the *bon ton* is ample, yet concise, strongly worded, yet unforced, and therefore justly deserves to be particularly introduced to your observation in this place—"The *bon ton* (says she) in conversation is not wit; in manners it is not politeness; in behaviour it is not address; but it is a little like them all: it can only belong to people of a certain rank, who live in a certain manner, with certain persons who have not certain virtues, who have certain vices, and who inhabit a certain part of the town: like a place by courtesy, it gets
" an

“ an higher rank than the person can
 “ claim, but which those who have a le-
 “ gal right to precedence dare not dispute
 “ for fear of being thought not to under-
 “ stand the rules of politeness.”

ON the whole, I cannot avoid giving it as my opinion in regard to this dialogue, that it is not only the best in the book, but also that it may be esteemed a model for this kind of writing, as it proves by the most forcible argument, example, how possible it is to render it as entertaining as it is instructive.



DIALOGUE XXVIII.

PLUTARCH—CHARON—A modern
 BOOKSELLER.

As in the Twenty-sixth dialogue the author has nobly vindicated the merit of true genius and valuable learning, he has in this as sharply exposed and censured the debasement of letters in the present

N 2

fashion-

fashionable taste of reading: what he points at most particularly, is the race of novel writers and forgers of false memoirs so numerous in this age; these he has very severely handled, as well seriously under the character of PLUTARCH, as ironically under that of the BOOKSELLER. In the height however of his resentment against them, a resentment which seems apparently excited by a real zeal for the cause of virtue, he does great honour to himself by excepting, and bestowing just praises on the ever-to-be-esteemed author of CLARISSA and Sir CHARLES GRANDISON, who, in an age when want of morals and licentiousness of character had inflated under their banners the prostituted pen of the novel-writer, has nobly dared to snatch it from them, and with an irresistible skill to aim its powers, tenfold increased when on the side of virtue and religion, and strike it even to the very vital source of the existence of its first employers.

THIS

THIS dialogue, as well as the preceding one, is full of spirited satire and pointed sentiment: in a word, all the three by this hand are delicately conceived and boldly executed. I promised you indeed, that I would close my account of them with some general observations; but as these remarks have happened to occur in the examination of each dialogue separately, I shall say nothing more of them, than to take notice of the great candour with which the noble author of the preceding ones has mentioned these, and acknowledge with him, “ *the great obligation which the public owes him, for having excited a genius so capable of uniting delight with instruction, and giving to knowledge and virtue those graces which the wit of the age has employed all its skill to bestow on folly and vice.*”

AND now, dear Sir, after having I fear tired you with the length of an epistle, which your own request has drawn on you the trouble of reading, I think it high time to leave you to some little repose and to
the

the leisure of making such observations on what you have read, as I know you are so capable of, and which I should perhaps have reason to tremble at, was I less acquainted with the candour of your disposition, and that eye of partial indulgence with which you ever receive whatever comes to your hand from,

DEAR SIR,

Your most obedient,

Humble Servant.

